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INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

FINALISTS 2008

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WELCOME

Michael French
Editor, Develop

Welcome to your special guide to the 2008 Develop Awards.

Now in their sixth year, the Develop Industry Excellence Awards are the only event of their kind, rewarding the work done by games development studios, technology and service companies from across Europe in the past 12 months.

They are also the only awards that acknowledge the things that matter most in games development – quality, talent, creativity and business smarts. Hype, marketing and PR are not important to us when it comes to choosing the finalists, and publishers haven't paid to get their games mentioned. All the teams, companies and games listed have got here on their own merits.

And of that shortlist, this year's finalists again represent and recognise the vibrant variety of talent and creativity on show at studios across Europe. Finalists hail from the UK, France, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and other countries.

Good luck to all the companies listed over the next 12 pages – and we hope to see you on the night.

THE AWARDS

CREATIVITY
Best New IP
Best Use of a Licence
Visual Arts
Audio Accomplishment
Publishing Hero

TECHNOLOGY AND SERVICES
Tools Provider
Technical Innovation
Creative Outsourcing
Services
Recruitment Company
Games:Edu New Talent Award

STUDIOS
Best New UK/European Studio
Best Mobile Studio
Business Development
Best Independent Developer
Best In-house Developer

SPECIAL INDUSTRY RECOGNITION AWARDS
Development Legend
Grand Prix

FOREWORD

Gary Lewis, Chris Doran and Julian Davis
Geomerics

Geomerics is proud and delighted to be part of the Develop Industry Excellence Awards for 2008. We are currently involved in one of the most momentous periods for our industry, and the awards allow us to celebrate all the excellent work carried out in the development community.

It is a pleasure to be in such talented company, among the people that will drive the entertainment industry towards record growth in the coming years. European developers are once again reclaiming their rightful place at the forefront of development in terms of technology and creativity, pushing the industry towards a future limited only by the vision and imagination of its artists.

At our offices in Cambridge we are building something that was designed to change the industry for the better. A technology that would fundamentally change the way games look, that would help suspend the disbelief of the player, that would create emotion and take feelings to levels that games have promised, but seldom achieved. In a world where first impressions last, Enlighten gives your creations the graphical edge to stand out immediately, and the depth to create atmosphere rivalled only by the movie industry.

"We are building something that was designed to change the industry for the better..."

In our race to create the most visually appealing games, we should not forget that not all games will benefit from a move towards film quality photorealism. However, if you are aiming for a genuinely immersive experience with emotional depth, this is far more easily achieved with the highest quality graphics. But Enlighten is not about yet another round of graphics refinement, with more polygons on screen and higher resolution textures, all requiring significantly more artist time for ever diminishing returns. With Enlighten we can transform the way worlds are created, making the whole process much easier and faster, and leaving artists free to do what they do best – create absorbing worlds that capture the imagination.

With Enlighten now available and the early feedback in, we at Geomerics are even more confident that we have achieved what we set out to. Enlighten is fundamentally changing the way games are made, for the benefit of all of us. I think we can all drink to that!

It only remains to offer the very best of luck to all the finalists in this year's Develop Industry Excellence Awards. We look forward to seeing you all at the event.

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CREATIVITY

BEST NEW IP

LostWinds *(Frontier Developments)*

Being joined in the WiiWare line-up by a *Final Fantasy* title would give any developer a sinking portent of being overshadowed, but that Frontier's *LostWinds* usurped heavyweights like Square Enix to being the jewel in the launch crown is a tribute to its effortlessly enjoyable play mechanic and inspired visuals.

Heavenly Sword *(Ninja Theory)*

Bringing the high-budget film epic feel to PS3, *Heavenly Sword* is an exercise in next-gen polish brought startlingly early into the machine's lifecycle. Melding professional acting and directing with hack'n'slash balletic combat made *Heavenly Sword* an impressively defined package – and we're not just talking about lead character Nariko's physical assets.

Crysis *(Crytek)*

Pushing forward advances in PC graphics technology was once the domain of American studio id, but now that crown clearly belongs to Crytek. *Crysis* received almost uniform praise from reviewers and proved that the studio knows how to drape a great game around said PC technology.

World in Conflict *(Massive)*

Decimating the PC gaming market like one of its eye-popping tactical nuke explosions, *World in Conflict* breathed life back into a stagnant genre to significant critical and commercial success. Now heading to consoles clad in Soviet robes, no doubt a similar level of popularity awaits from the world's sofa gamers.

Viking: Battle for Asgard *(Creative Assembly)*

The Creative Assembly's second console outing was another historical epic – this time plunging players into a realm of Vikings. The game boasts thousands of on-screen warrors fighting it out in epic battles which take players across three regions; in all, it's another effort displaying the studio's canny history-meets-action adventure ethos.

Overlord *(Triumph)*

Taking a deliciously devilish approach to being evil – an approach that went down so well in *Dungeon Keeper* – *Overlord* melded good old hero slaying with high-class visuals and snappy writing to great success. It's proven such a good formula that, in addition to launching on Xbox 360 and PC, it's now being ported and expanded for PS3.

BEST USE OF A LICENCE

Ferrari Challenge *(Eutechnyx)*

It might be a smaller indie dealing with a licence previously handled by the big boys, but Eutechnyx ensured it worked closely with Ferrari throughout the development of *Ferrari Challenge*, getting access to performance data to build what it claims is the most realistic recreation of Ferrari cars ever seen in a game.

The Darkness *(Starbreeze)*

Taking a beloved comic book series and turning it into a game can be tricky, something any hardcore reader can grumpily attest. That Starbreeze – of other celebrated tie-in *The Chronicles of Riddick* – managed to once again produce a critically and commercially successful FPS based on another medium's IP is certainly praise-worthy.

Sega Superstar Tennis *(Sumo Digital)*

Being in charge of updating decades of Sega IP for systems as technologically diverse as the DS, Wii and Xbox 360, it's a wonder that Sumo Digital managed to nail so many distinct art styles – let alone riffing on top of them to create themed tennis courts for all of the featured characters.

Enemy Territory: Quake Wars *(Splash Damage)*

Former mod-team and id buddies Splash Damage's application of the *Quake* IP to its popular *Enemy Territory* class-based multiplayer formula was well received on its release last year, expanding the *Quake* universe to cover more Earth-based skirmishes and bringing a brand new flavour of gameplay to the franchise.

Lego Indiana Jones *(Traveller's Tales)*

Traveller's Tales once again works its Lego magic, leaving the far, far away *Star Wars* galaxy and bringing things back down to Earth to tie in with the brand new return to the Indiana Jones saga. All without losing the slapstick charm and co-operative mayhem that made the *Star Wars* games so massively popular, of course.

Metal Gear Solid Mobile *(Ideaworks3D)*

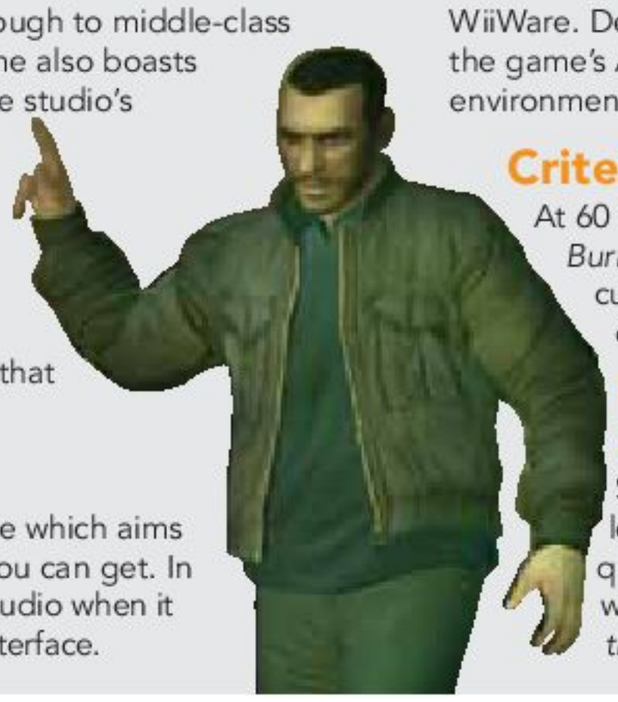
Once upon a time the closest you could get to *Metal Gear* on your mobile was having the codec noise as your SMS tone. But then Ideaworks3D came along and brought a brand new, fully three-dimensional *Metal Gear Solid* adventure to the platform. It's impressed licensor Konami so much that the game is being pushed to audiences across the globe.

CREATIVITY

VISUAL ARTS

Rockstar North *(Grand Theft Auto IV)*

GTA IV's real visual strength lies in its environmental detail – the varied districts take you from the seedy slums through to middle-class residential areas and busy urban centres. The game also boasts plenty of life-like character animation thanks to the studio's use of NaturalMotion's Euphoria engine.



Crytek *(Crysis)*

As the first DirectX 10-only game, *Crysis* threw players into an immersive world that accurately simulated realistic foliage, its game engine providing a level of interactivity (and destruction) that would usually be seen only in pre-rendered CG.

London Studio *(SingStar PS3 UI)*

The PS3 version of *SingStar* boasts a slick interface which aims to be as far from a traditional game interface as you can get. In fact it works so well SCE took cues from London Studio when it came to relaunching the PlayStation Store's user-interface.

Frontier Developments *(LostWinds)*

LostWinds' charming visuals have made it the stand-out game on WiiWare. Despite old-school methodology of reusing many assets, the game's Asian-inspired design remains distinctive, with memorable environments and quality animation throughout. And all in just 40MB.

Criterion Games *(Burnout Paradise)*

At 60 frames per second and hundreds of miles an hour, *Burnout*'s new Paradise City environment presented a cunning use of palette, mixing subtle lighting and ambient effects with a the series' characteristic vibrancy.

Ninja Theory/SCEE Cambridge *(Heavenly Sword)*

Striving for intensely convincing cinematics, Ninja Theory looked to exploit its story-telling prowess and mix it with CG-quality real-time graphics. The result was top-notch animation which boasts performance capture acting from *The Lord of the Rings*' Andy Serkis and key technical prowess.

AUDIO ACCOMPLISHMENT

Rockstar North *(Grand Theft Auto IV)*

GTA IV included all the familiar sound staples of the franchise – a host of radio DJs, quality acting, plus vehicle and weapon noises – the latest game took that to the next level. There are over 800 different voices in the game, with over 80,000 lines of dialogue. And then there's the updated ambient soundscape, more realistic pedestrian sound FX and that vast licensed music soundtrack…

Ninja Theory/SCEE Cambridge *(Heavenly Sword)*

The audio in *Heavenly Sword* was the culmination of four years' R&D. Two non-industry names were brought in as well: Nitin Sawhney for music and New York studio Play It By Ear for all the sound effects and Foley work. All brought together by the game's polished audio engine.

Sumo Digital *(Sega Superstars Tennis)*

Mashing-up a host of classic games IP led Sumo to wisely partner with the industry's Sega music expert: composer Richard Jacques. The team created original music, remixed classic Sega tracks and provided 5.1 surround mixes for over 90 music tracks spanning 15 years' worth of IP.

Codemasters Studios *(Race Driver GRID)*

Building on the foundation laid by last year's *Colin McRae DIRT*, Codemasters' *GRID* mixes 760 sound sources plus music, collisions, damage, crowds and other ambient sounds during races. The game also uses '5.1.1' audio, where controller rumble works with sub-bass effects.

London Studio *(SingStar PS3)*

When it came to bringing its flagship music title to PS3, London Studio responded to the next-gen audio challenge on three fronts. First was the integration of Sony Sound Forge pro audio plug-ins to run natively on PS3. The next was re-engineering tracks for surround sound. Lastly, the team paired with the Dublin Institute of Technology to re-factor its ADRess technology.

Criterion Games *(Burnout Paradise)*

Excelling in the same way it does visually, *Burnout Paradise*'s audio pushed Criterion's sound team to significantly upgrade its technology, helping create effects and sound detail which perfectly worked alongside the on-screen carnage.

PUBLISHING HERO

Codemasters

Although known for internally-made games like *Colin McRae DIRT* and *Race Driver GRID*, Codemasters has courted key European independent developers in the past year. Signings include Triumph Studios (*Overlord*), Firebrand (*GRID* DS), NiK NaK (*Dragonology* Wii), Six By Nine (*Dragonology* DS), and Supersonic (*Emergency Mayhem*).

Nintendo

Via the introduction of WiiWare Nintendo has given any licensed developer the chance to turn publisher and digitally distribute their games to Wii's large audience. Key to the strategy has been pushing independents into the spotlight ahead of first-party offerings.

Sega

Sega claims to have published more games from independent UK studios than ever before in the last 12 months. The firm worked closely with Sumo Digital (*Sega Superstars Tennis*) and Bizarre Creations (*The Club*) for newer titles and has already confirmed a partnership with Eurocom for the official game of the Beijing Olympics.

LucasArts

LucasArts has kept much of its out-of-house strategy focused on a few UK games developers. It continued its fruitful relationship with Traveller's Tales for *Lego Indiana Jones*, and published more *Thrillville* titles from Frontier – and also has a partnership with Rebellion for *Battlefront*.

Gamecock

Although a newcomer on the publishing scene, Gamecock has championed new IP and better profits for developers; its slogan is 'Indie Label Spirit. Major Label Muscle'. European signings include UK outfit Firefly's *Dungeon Hero* and *Stronghold*, *Velvet Assassin* by Germany's Replay Studios, plus a new game by Croatia's Croteam.

1C & 505 Games

1C has built a favoured reputation amongst Eastern European developers. Its partnership with 505 (itself focused on bringing under-exposed titles from Japan and elsewhere to European gamers) has built an enviable pan-European distribution network serving studios which would otherwise be ignored by the big boys of publishing.

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INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

shining lights

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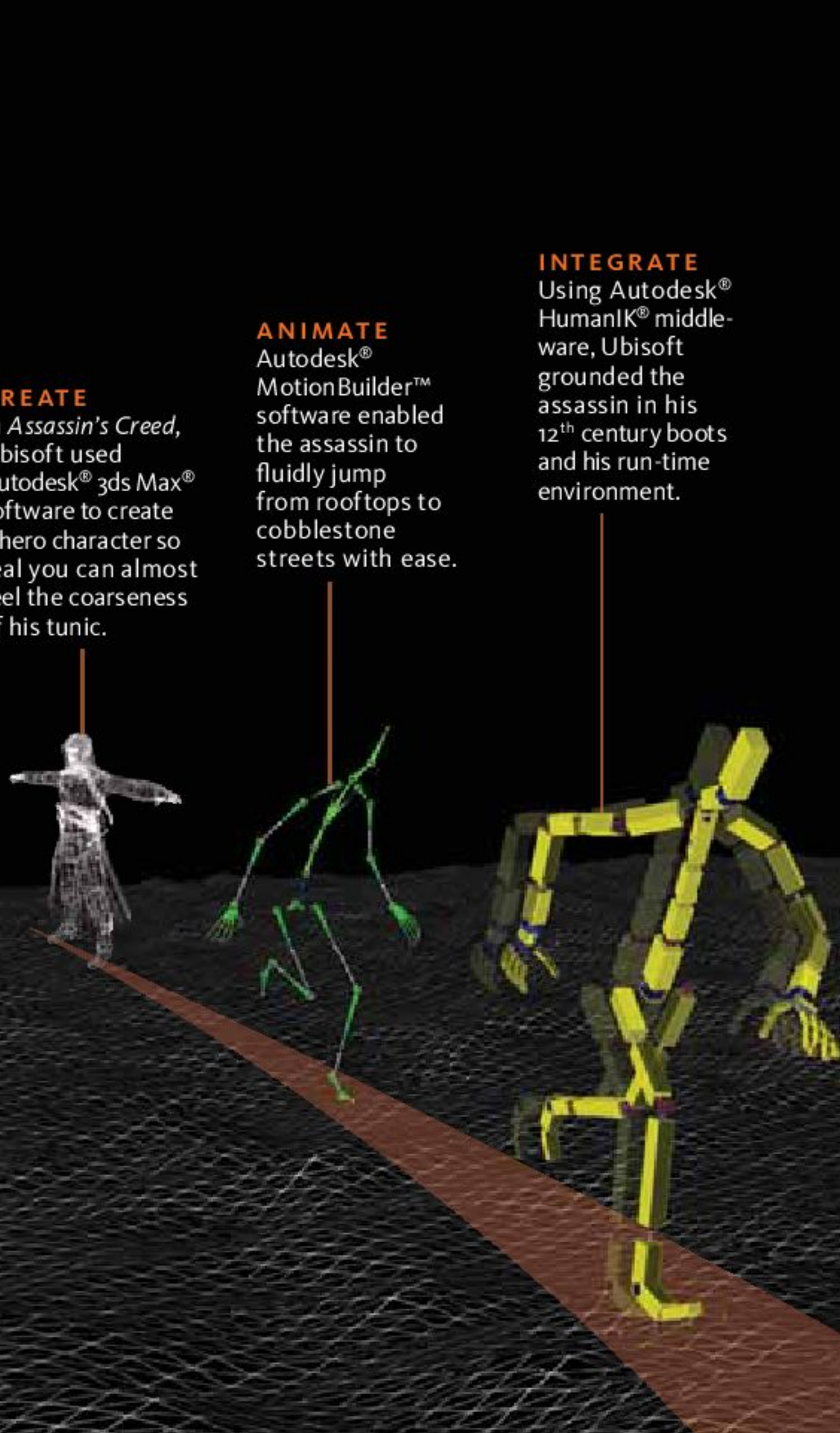
ANIMATE
Autodesk® MotionBuilder™ software enabled the assassin to fluidly jump from rooftops to cobblestone streets with ease.

INTEGRATE
Using Autodesk® HumanIK® middleware, Ubisoft grounded the assassin in his 12th century boots and his run-time environment.



HOW UBISOFT GAVE AN ASSASSIN HIS SOUL.

autodesk.co.uk/games

Image courtesy of Ubisoft

UBISOFT

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TECHNOLOGY & SERVICES

TOOLS PROVIDER

Hansoft
Breaking into the project management world would appear to be easy when looking at Hansoft's success, but its adoption comes from offering the functionality studios really need – in particular support for agile development methodologies and a defect tracking system.

Sony & SN Systems
Sony significantly reduced the barriers to PS3 development this year by halving the cost of development units and integrating subsidiary SN's popular ProDG tool suite into the PS3 SDK. SN was also busy, halving the cost of the PSP version of ProDG and adding the Tuner to the suite to similarly boost PSP development.

Havok
The last year's been a busy one for the Irish physics masters – two major updates for Havok Physics and Animation, enhancing support for the Wii and PlayStation 3, releasing Havok Complete for free to PC game developers and preparing new boys Havok Cloth and Havok Destruction for a mid-2008 release. Oh, and being purchased by Intel, too.

NaturalMotion
This past year NaturalMotion released cross-platform graphical animation engine Morpheme to acclaim from developers such as IO, Gearbox and CPP. And Euphoria saw its first proof-of-concept release in *Grand Theft Auto IV*, the fluid way in which bodies bounced off car bonnets garnering significant gleeful attention from gamers.

IDV
Foliage middleware might not sounds like the most glamorous – or, indeed, the most useful – of tools, but it only takes a cursory glance at SpeedTree's customer list, featuring European studios such as Frontier, Rockstar North, Pivotal, Massive, Bizarre and Funcom, to realise just how invaluable the technology really is.

Epic Games
The past 12 months have seen significant improvements to Unreal Engine 3's performance on the PlayStation 3. Add in Unreal's widening use, even outside of the games industry with visualisation firms and animators, and it's plain to see that this year's been good for Epic.

TECHNICAL INNOVATION

Rockstar North/NaturalMotion/Image Metrics
(Grand Theft Auto IV)
Rockstar turned to two specialists, Image Metrics and NaturalMotion, for cut-scene and gameplay animation respectively in *GTA IV*. Close collaboration between them helped build some of the most widely-praised animation, be that during interactive moments (where NaturalMotion's Euphoria provides procedurally-generated reactions) or static ones (Image Metrics handled over 300 minutes of performance capture footage for *GTA IV*'s cinematics).

Ninja Theory/SCEE Cambridge
(Heavenly Sword)
Ninja Theory and SCEE Cambridge worked hard (in the project's final year the team ratio was 2:1) to realise the ambitious vision for *Heavenly Sword*. The result: a feature-packed PS3 rendering engine. Also key was a two-year collaboration with Weta Digital to pioneer performance capture in games. Direct results are already being used in Hollywood movies.

Ideaworks3D *(Airplay)*
The London-based developer's cross-platform tech and run-time environment Airplay has gone from strength to strength in the past year, with major feature additions. The result of seven years' R&D, Airplay has supported work by Ideaworks3D's internal studio such as high-end mobile games *Metal Gear Solid Mobile* and *PGR3*.

SCEE R&D Team *(PhyreEngine)*
Touted as the best-performing graphics engine on PS3, PhyreEngine is wholly-developed by the Sony R&D team in London and is free as part of the SDK. Sony provides full source code – it is also provided for PC and can be recompiled for 360 – which has meant PhyreEngine has been part of all sorts of projects, from *flOw* through to Codemasters' EGO engine.

Geomerics *(Enlighten)*
It's still early days for Enlighten tool, but it has already caught the eyes of many in the industry as the only real-time radiosity lighting product for game development, pitched to allow developers the ability to create environments with fully dynamic lighting.

CREATIVE OUTSOURCING

Axis Animation
Scottish outfit Axis has worked its magic on many a promo this year, including *Crysis*, *Colin McRae: DIRT*, *Heavenly Sword*, *Race Driver: GRID*, and *Thrillville: Off the Rails*, extending its reach beyond UK developers to continental Europe and across the pond.

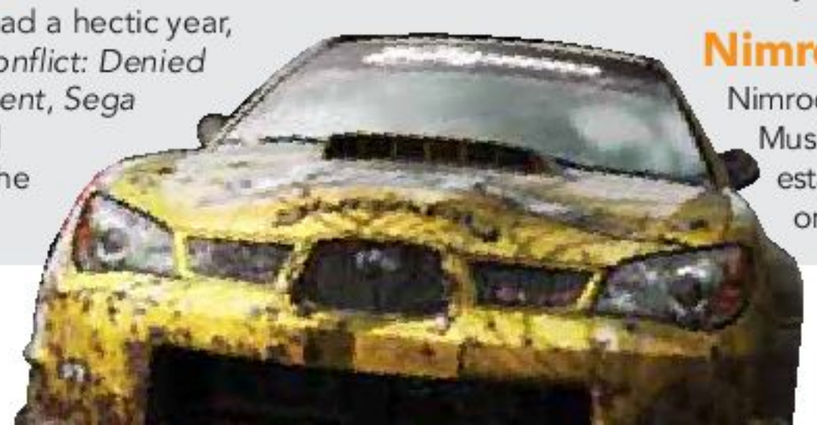
Side UK
This year saw Side launch Sidelines, a new specialist game writing agency to help developers find the right writer for their project, as well as expand its casting process to look for facial likeness and physical performance for upcoming titles like *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed*.

Richard Jacques Studios
The eight full-time staff of RJS have had a hectic year, working on *Mass Effect*, *The Club*, *Conflict: Denied Ops*, *Pursuit Force: Extreme Judgement*, *Sega Superstars Tennis* as well as continual overview of each and every song of the *SingStar* franchise.

Outsource Media UK
Weathering through some big changes – a fire wiped out the company's Yorkshire HQ last November – OMUK emerged defiant, seizing the opportunity to move its studio to central London. The firm, which specialises in voice for games, in the past year worked on *Formula One*, *WipEout Pulse* and *Silent Hill Origins*, amongst others.

The Audio Guys
Young upstarts The Audio Guys went from strength to strength this year, taking on the entire audio responsibility for *Sega Rally* and doing SFX, casting, directing and recording on Triumph's *Overlord*, plus other projects. Its approach of providing an audio department rather than just a simple service would seem to be paying off.

Nimrod Productions
Nimrod's expansion continued apace this year. Former Island Music president Marc Marot joined the team, the firm establishment of a new 'culturisation' department and worked on prestigious Nintendo games like *Pokemon* and *Wii Fit*.



TECHNOLOGY & SERVICES

SERVICES

Testronic Labs
A significant ramp up in the past year has made Testronics' games team a major player in the QA field – in just over 18 months it's gone from a six-man unit to 150 across two sites. A recent move has seen it complement the bread and butter console testing, localisation and compliance duties with the exclusive licensing of MMOG testing solution Venus Blue, which it is making available to clients.

Partnertrans UK
Offering localisation, quality assurance and audio services, Partnertrans UK took a step towards closer ties with the industry in the UK after an MBO in 2007 which divorced it from its German parent. Its services include translation for all languages by native speakers, voice overs and audio composition.

Babel Media
2007 to 2008 has seen the popular Babel expand its business further. Two new strings were added to its bow in the last 12 months joining its expertise in the QA, translation, audio, localisation and print. The first is a gameplay testing service, which looks at the subjective areas of level balancing, anaylsis of play experience and focus testing. The second is the addition of MMO services, which offers to be a complete end-to-end solution for those looking to make and maintain online worlds.

Audiomotion
Another banner year for Audiomotion, during which the stalwart motion capture company has worked on a number of titles including *Pro Evolution Soccer*, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, *FIFA*, *Haze*, and other unannounced titles. As one of the few studios in the world capable of delivering Full Performance Capture, it has also been called in to work on a number of movie projects.

U-Trax
The past 12 months have represented a strong period for the Dutch firm, whose business has grown 30 per cent year-on-year. With partners such as SCEE, EA and Ubisoft, U-Trax has found its multilingual games localisation talents in demand. The company claims industry-leading Dutch and Nordic language teams plus strength in casual games (another partner is Real). And, its QA business proved so fruitful it recently spun it out into its own company.

RECRUITMENT COMPANY

Specialmove
Specialmove has secured praise thanks to its stringent 'no spam' policy, which sees applicants' CVs forwarded to clients only should they be interested in the position. It's also opened a new office in Santa Monica to fuel growth into the US and hopes to expand within the UK within the coming years.

Day One Search
This new entry to the recruitment scene scored big this year, securing the patronage of new social gaming scenesters Emote and the big international duo of Linden Labs and NCsoft, the former of which required liason with HR managers not only locally but also in the US in order to adequately seed the new office.

Aardvark Swift
Popular for its communication skills and adeptness at selectively screening CVs, Aardvark Swift's clients are full of praise for the long-standing firm. Also popular with lobbyists was its uniformly high quality of service regardless of consultant dealt with, its friendly nature and that, importantly, they're not too pushy.

Amiqus
Taking a consultative approach and over seven years of expertise are what Amiqus says makes them a popular choice as a recruitment agency, fuelling the firm to grow over the last 12 months to encompass eight full-time games industry consultants, with a further two dedicated to HR and finance for games.

OPM
Servicing the games industry for over ten years, OPM is one of the longest-running recruitment providers around, and prides itself on only registering experienced and appropriate candidates and its 'embedded relationships' with clients, which sees it working as business partners rather than mere service providers.

GAMES:EDU NEW TALENT AWARD

Abertay University & Dare to be Digital
With Dare expanding to encompass the public-facing ProtoPlay, new host centres across the UK and big-league backing from Channel 4, it's been an amazing year for the Dare to be Digital team. And parent Abertay is no slouch: it's still the only university with two Skillset-accredited courses, and remains at the forefront of games education.

Rare
Rare's software intern programme is one of the most popular schemes of its type, with all previous interns returning for permanent jobs at the company after graduation. It now offers smaller summer internships and positions within the art team, and was recently a finalist in the National Work Experience Awards.

Microsoft
Not quite the soulless corporate giant some may like to think, Microsoft this year unveiled a scheme to give its software away to students. But most important of all is XNA, its effort to democratise game development while discovering the talent of tomorrow.

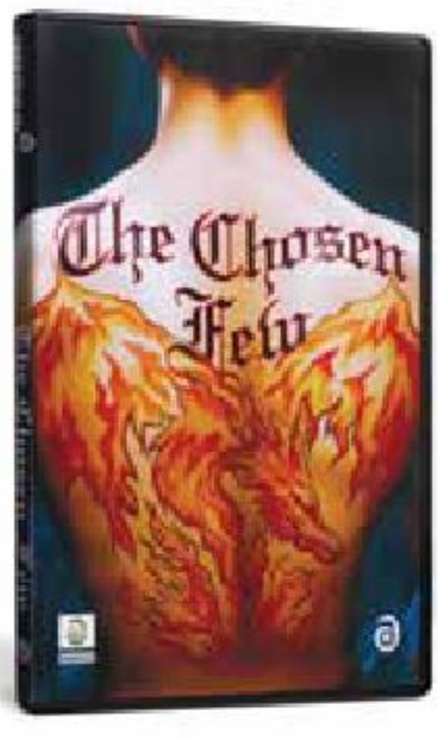
Blitz
Not only is Blitz one of the most active studios in the UK in terms of interfacing with academia in order to help develop courses, it also has a highly developed internal training facility – Blitz Academy – to help its staff grow with the studio and meet the demands of the industry's rapidly changing landscape and Blitz's diverse audiences.

University of Derby
Boasting a teaching environment similar to that of a game studio, Derby's games programming course is another highly-regarded course that churns out some impressive graduates. The course is also popular for its placement year, which has seen students resident at fellow nominee Rare amongst others.

Hull University
Hull has carved a name for itself in the games education field with its Games Programming masters course. Covering graphics, physics and AI within a year might seem ambitious, but graduates are held up by the industry at large as an example of what games education must achieve.

amiqus GAMES

Congratulations to all Develop finalists for 2008.
Amiqus are proud to be a sponsor at this event
and look forward to seeing you all in Brighton.



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STUDIOS

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BEST NEW UK/EUROPEAN STUDIO

Finblade
This new mobile games outfit, formed by the team which founded IOMO, isn't even a year old, but has already made a splash via its first title, a *Tomb Raider* game. Upcoming collaborations, including one with US firm Zeetoo for the Zeemote-based *Fireworks*, are also proving the team's point that the mobile sector is still ripe for independents.

Konami Paris
Japanese firms don't have much of a track record – either good or bad – in building studios outside of their homeland, which makes year-old mobile team Konami Paris all the more impressive. The team's first game, a version of *Pro Evolution Soccer* for a variety of handsets, arrived last year to rave reviews from critics and fans.

Oxygen Studios
Established in early 2007, Oxygen's new Greater London studio has been prolific, releasing a number of value games based on mass market UK licences across a variety of formats, from PS2 and DS to WiiWare. The team prides itself on internal engine Ozone, used for all its games.

Rockstar London
With the furore around *Manhunt 2* being so loud, it was easy to forget that the game was the first to be produced by a brand new team established by Rockstar, and one of the first times the company has built a studio from scratch rather than acquired one. The game itself is considered a respectable continuation of Rockstar North's original.

Doublesix
Kuju's latest studio plans to build a strong reputation as a leading WiiWare, XBLA, PSN and PC developer, having been established to create 'have another go' games for downloadable platforms. The team has already proven itself with its *Geometry Wars* port for the DS and Wii.

BEST MOBILE STUDIO

Progressive Media
This Danish studio has been plugging away since 2002, but in the past 12 months it's impressed journalists, gamers and industry contemporaries with new mobile game *SolaRola*, released by Eidos. The game, a jump'n'run puzzler putting you in charge of a rolling blob, has won a raft of awards for its impressive gameplay mechanic.

Ideaworks3D
In the past 12 months, London, UK-based Ideaworks3D completed work on four major mobile games, including the impressive *Metal Gear Solid Mobile* (for Konami), *Project Gotham Racing 3* (Glu), plus *System Rush: Evolution* and *Mile High Pinball* (Nokia). The company also added professional services and premium content services to its offer.

Digital Chocolate Finland/Sumea
Digital Chocolate's Finland team continues to be one of the most consistently performing mobile studios, churning out quality game after game. Highlights from this past year include the likes of *Tower Bloxx Deluxe*, *Mini Golf 99 Holes*, *24: Special Ops*, *Brick Breaker Revolution*, and *Pyramid Bloxx*, plus game apps for Facebook.

Distinctive Developments
A lot has gone on at Sheffield-based Distinctive this year. It has worked on first-party games for EA, started making iPhone titles, and opened a QA facility in Poland which is also available to third-parties. It was also one of a handful of studios which smartly looked to exploit the Facebook boom by creating profile apps based on its 3D titles.

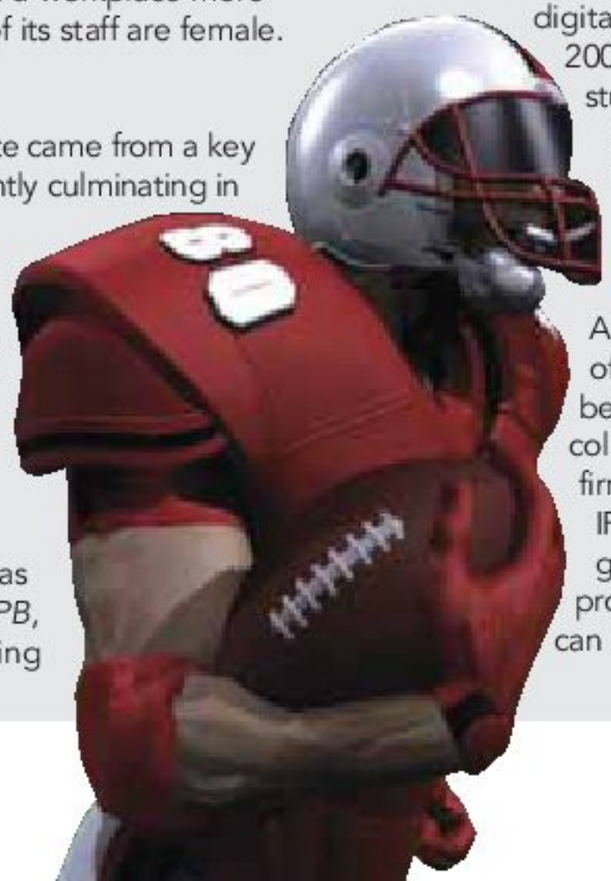
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Zoë Mode
After rebranding in mid-2007, the team formerly known as Kuju Brighton has raised the bar in the self-titled 'lifestyle' genre, developing *Dancing With The Stars* for Activision and continuing its long-running *SingStar* PS2 relationship with London Studio. With 130 staff, the studio is growing at a rapid pace – and specifically hiring from outside the games industry and looking to create a workplace more diverse than other studios; around ten per cent of its staff are female.

Rebellion
This UK independent's most successful year to date came from a key investment in staff and internal technology – recently culminating in the opening of a multi-million pound bespoke studio HQ in Oxford and further development of its Derby and Liverpool teams. Rebellion continues to boast partnerships with heavyweight publishers which has helped drive organic growth and reinvestment of its profits in workforce expansion and internal engine Asura.

Realtime Worlds
With no game to release in the past 12 months as the team continues work on upcoming MMO *APB*, Realtime Worlds instead spent the year impressing with its business smarts. Key activity was securing a $50m US VC investment boost – money from which was used, in an unprecedented step, to buy back the distribution rights to *APB* from its original publisher so the company could better control its destiny.

Team 17
Now in its 18th year of business, Team 17 has blazed a trail in the digital download space, achieving record turnover and profit in 2007 courtesy of its self-published digital titles. Internally, the studio has moved towards smaller teams to make these games, but has also put together a 45-man specialised team working on a new UE3-powered *Leisure Suit Larry* game for Sierra – and a new IP to follow that.



NaturalMotion
Although continuing to deliver tools for the industry in the form of Endorphin and Morpheme, NaturalMotion finally took its bespoke Euphoria business to consumers via the *GTA IV* collaboration with Rockstar North. And in a unique move, the firm moved into full game development itself, announcing new IP *Backbreaker*. An internally-developed American football game built using NaturalMotion's technology, the idea is to prove conventional wisdom wrong and show that small teams can build triple-A games on new technology without a publisher.

BEST INDEPENDENT DEVELOPER

Rebellion

Success with the like of *The Simpsons Game*, *Star Wars Battlefront: Renegade Squadron* and *Aliens vs. Predator: Requiem* have helped Rebellion celebrate its most profitable year to date. But continued investment in an entirely new open-plan studio, plus 50 new staff to fill it, should see Rebellion on to an even bigger 2008.

Jagex

Runescape might not be the hippest MMO with adults, but its teenage fanbase is significant enough to propel Jagex, originally a two-person outfit, to over 400 staff and significant financial stability. Not resting on its laurels, this year it launched a new casual portal based on its proprietary Java technology, aiming for an ambitious new game per fortnight release schedule.

CCP

Although its subscriber count doesn't trouble *World of Warcraft*, *EVE Online*'s hardcore community is probably equally sized, garnering a huge fanbase. But that Icelandic independent CCP can regularly release free expansion packs and massive graphical overhauls for *EVE* and still grow significantly is a real achievement.

Frontier

The last year has seen Cambridge-based Frontier release another entry in its *Thrillville* series, but it's the studio's flexibility to let a small team release a game like *LostWinds*, an idea born through its collaborative game design forum, all while ramping up in anticipation of *The Outsider* and (whisper it!) *Elite IV*, that really sets it apart.

Splash Damage

It's been a long time coming for Splash Damage, whose first entirely in-house developed boxed game – *Enemy Territory: Quake Wars* – emerged last year after a period making multiplayer maps for id Software. The London-based studio still operates a fairly small (by industry standards) team of just over 30 and has remained true to its roots in the modding community.

Ninja Theory

You wouldn't expect that the grandest title of the PS3's first year would have come from an independent, but with *Heavenly Sword* Ninja Theory delivered a grand-scale multimedia extravaganza. It's all change at the studio now, though, as it enters the real-time animation space and moves onto multiple formats.

BEST IN-HOUSE DEVELOPER

Rockstar North

It's ironic that such an elusive, quiet studio would be the one to make the biggest splash in the industry with its massively anticipated *GTA IV*, but Rockstar North manages both nevertheless. That said, the very fact that *GTA IV* then debuted to acres of great reviews, hundreds of millions in day one revenues, and showed real technical and creative smarts pretty much speaks for itself.

Codemasters Studios

Codemasters' in-house talent can sometimes get overlooked, but the addition of a new studio in Guildford, the saving of a large portion of Sega Racing Studios' jettisoned staff, and a ramp up to 350 personnel working on high-profile titles like *Colin McRae: DIRT* and *Race Driver: GRID* means it'd be hard to do so this year. And given that it's now entrusted with the *Formula 1* licence, it could be an even bigger year to come.

Criterion Games

EA's arcade racing specialist had been quiet for the last two years, but 2008 saw it return to form with the much anticipated open-world take on the *Burnout* crash-fest. But it's not stopping there: it's also preparing to support the game in what some are calling the biggest downloadable content attack plan so far.

Sports Interactive

You don't need us to tell you that *Football Manager* is a popular game – the 2008 edition held the top spot on the PC chart for over 16 weeks – but SI didn't rest on its laurels, preparing the MMO *Football Manager Live* and spreading into mass-media by launching a demo with newspaper *News of the World* that was so popular it crashed the paper's website.

Bizarre Creations

The first year that the studio can be considered for the In-House award and it's a pretty decent one, even if none of the titles were made for its new parent Activision – but *Project Gotham Racing 4* took the series' much-loved handling on to two wheels for the first time, and *The Club* introduced racing tempo to the shooter genre to good reception.

London Studio

Sony's London Studio continues to pioneer new experiences for the PlayStation platform, working on the first electronically distributed PSP title *Beats* – itself an achievement for mixing the rhythm-action genre with users' own music libraries – as well as pioneering more video functions with PlayStation Eye, *SingStar*'s online social performance-sharing and launching the first long-tail game download content service, the SingStore.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS

DEVELOPMENT LEGEND

This is one of two very special awards for which the winner is not announced until the night itself.

The Development Legend prize can go to any person or individual who has made an impressive impact on games development, be that in a commercial, creative, technological or business sense – or all of those – in their lifetime.

Only after careful consideration by the *Develop* team and soundings from the rest of the industry is the winner chosen. Feel free to send your suggestions for the winner through to *Develop*'s editor at Michael.French@intentmedia.co.uk

GRAND PRIX

The other of our two awards with no finalist shortlist, the Grand Prix is bestowed by *Develop* on a UK or European company in recognition of outstanding achievements in game development over the past 12 months.

Like the Development Legend award, the winner is chosen after thoughtful discussion by the *Develop* team and soundings from the rest of the industry. The decision takes into account both the creative and business elements of the games development sector.

Feel free to send your suggestions for the winner through to *Develop*'s editor at Michael.French@intentmedia.co.uk

HURRY UP!

The Develop Industry Excellence Awards 2008 this year take place on Wednesday July 30th at the Hilton Metropole Hotel in Brighton, alongside the Develop conference and expo.

Over 400 industry professionals, representing over 100 different companies, are expected to pack into the venue and the event is due to sell out well in advance.

To ensure that you are there, alongside the world's leading studios and service companies contact Jodie.Holdway@bhpr.co.uk or call +44 (0) 1462 456780 to book your table or seat.

More information can also be found at www.developmag.com/develop-awards

GAVIN CHESHIRE, VP OF CODEMASTERS STUDIOS, EXPLAINS WHY THE COMPANY IS SPONSORING THE DEVELOP AWARDS IN 2008

To say that the past 12 months have represented a great period for Codemasters and its internal studios would be an understatement.

Last year we sponsored the *Develop* Awards under the banner 'powered by Neon', championing our new internal engine, which has formed the basis of our entire internal development slate. Since the release of the first game using that engine, *Colin McRae DIRT*, the technology has evolved significantly, and become a full tech brand known as the EGO Engine to better represent the core position the engine has at the centre of our business. It's a durable and flexible piece of technology which will serve us well in the years to come. It also formed the backbone of our latest racing game, *Race Driver GRID*, which recently debuted to great reviews.

On the Studios side of our business, in the past year our headcount has risen via expansion and growth. We've opened a new studio in Guildford – the first time we've established a team in the UK away from our HQ in Warwickshire. That ambitious team is working on a brand new surprising IP that we hope to reveal to our contemporaries in the industry soon. We were also recently able to offer jobs to a number of staff that would have otherwise lost employment after the closure of Sega's Racing Studio.

Elsewhere, the studio at our HQ and the team at our art satellite based in Kuala Lumpur continue to grow, as projects like *Operation Flashpoint 2* and the new game based on the Formula 1 licence, which we proudly won just last month, hit full gear.

There are now over 350 staff working at Codemasters Studios' offices around the world, all of them working towards the same aim – creating games that exploit the sweet-spot where creativity overlaps with our excellent games technology.

As ever, we're on the look-out for the best in development talent to join us – be it in Warwickshire, Guildford or overseas; just head for the careers section of the Codemasters website.

Meanwhile the publishing side of our business continues to work with the best in independent development talent from around the world to build an impressive slate of externally-made games which complement the titles from our internal teams.

Key European signings included Triumph Studios (*Overlord*), Firebrand (*GRID* DS), NiK NaK (*Dragonology* Wii), Six By Nine (*Dragonology* DS) and Supersonic (*Emergency Mayhem*). US studio partners include NetDevil (*JumpGate*), Turbine (*Lord of the Rings Online*), Liquid Entertainment (*Rise of the Argonauts*) and Blue Omega (*Damnation*).

Ultimately, our aim has been to make the best games in the industry and work with the best talent, be they those which choose to work as part of the growing and ambitious Codemasters Studios team or as a partner for an external product.

That's why we're a sponsor of this year's *Develop* Awards, which acknowledge and reward the same things to which we aspire – quality and creativity. Well done the nominees and good luck to all involved.

"We're a sponsor of this year's Develop Awards as they reward the same thing to which we aspire – quality and creativity…"

develop

INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

WEDNESDAY JULY 30th

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